

Interview

Gerard Seligman –

President of Caravan Arts Consultancy

Gerald Seligman is a man with more than 30 years of experience in the world music industry; He is the founder of EMI Hemisphere – one of the first extensive compilations of music of the world carried out by an international until 2000. He has produced or compiled over 100 releases. He has served as General Director for WOMEX 2006- 2009, and is now the President of his own company Caravan Arts Consultancy, He was kind enough to answer me few questions from Borneo where he was invited as a consultant for the Borneo World Music Expo.

More info : https://www.womex.com/virtual/gerald_seligman/member/gerald_seligman

WM oasis: You're a pioneer in world music, with more than 25 years experience, but you were not one of the participants of the Meeting at the Empress of Russia, On 27 July 1987? Why, and what do you think about the name "world music" that have been chosen by the group?

G.S - Time passes. It is now over 30 years... The term "world music" is one we have all come to hate, but that, really, is a sign of how successful it has been. And, to be honest, it never was meant to be a genre, but rather a marketing term for retail -- "File under World Music". It was a bin to put the LPs and CDs in since years ago this sort of music was spread all over the record store. It was hard to track down but became much easier once it could all be grouped under a single name in a given area of the shop. It was brilliant in that respect. It worked.

WM oasis: You are the founder of EMI Hemisphere Label, General Director of WOMEX,, President of Caravan Arts Consultancy and consultant for different organisations. All the music events seem to happen in Europe and America. Why have there not been a womex in Dakar, Rabat, or Cape Town as example?

G.S - You would have to ask the current director of womex. But, in my time there, it was important to have the event stay where it was created. 70% of the delegates came from Europe. Rather than move womex to other countries, the idea evolved to create new events in other places. So Porto Musical was created in Brazil; Moshito was created in South Africa. I myself co-created, co-directed the first two years of a new even in La Reunion for the Indian Ocean. In fact, I am writing this from Borneo, where I am directing the second year of the Borneo World Music Expo for Asia, an event I created with the Sarawak Tourist Board.

WM oasis -As the African athletes, there are thousands of musicians like Salif keita, Youssou ndour, cheb Khaled, Kidjo etc. in Africa waiting to be discovered and promoted. As consultant what can we do to for these musicians?

G.S - The musicians you mention have wonderfully active careers. Thankfully, the world recognizes the great talent. For new musicians in these regions there is BEMA, Moshito again and other events that are bringing programmers and professionals to their regions.

WM oasis - As the owner of the company Caravan Arts Consultancy, what is your message to the ministers of culture in Africa and the Arab world?

G.S - A message as such perhaps I don't have. Rather an interest in doing what I can in my small way to help promote artists from these regions and help get them wider audiences. I have been involved in an Africa-Caribbean-Pacific project when I was advising the EC; and I have worked on an African music and crafts project as well. Frankly, any chance I get to work with these remarkable musical cultures I will leap at, such is my love of what they create.

WM oasis -You are now working as consultant for the Borneo World Music Expo. The expo is specifically designed to expose Asian and ethnic musicians to the international market, do you believe that the Asian music will succeed to be exported to Europe and America?

G.S - Given how expensive it is for artists from these regions to frequent the European and North American expos, it was important to create an event in Asia to compliment ones like ApaMM in South Korea, the Australasian World Music Expo in Australia, and EarthSync in India. We all work together in collaboration to try and create Asian networks. The music is so diverse, so rich, so varied that not enough people are being exposed to these riches. We all hope to change that. But, as in many regions of the world, what the local market wants and what the international market wants is often very different. So we try to be sensitive while still encouraging artists not to abandon tradition in favor of international pop and the rest of it.

WM oasis -Musicians from Western Sahara and Palestine have been forgotten for different political reasons, what can WOMEX and other organizations do to help these musicians?

G.S - Again, I can't speak for Womex, but here, too, there is so much there to offer the world. Opportunities must be provided so that these artists can overcome the significant visa issues to be afforded more chances to perform. Sometimes those of us in the field are willing and anxious to help but our governments make it difficult to bring these artists in. That must be resisted.

WM oasis - According to you, what is the definition of world music, except that is the name of a global music from other countries?

G.S - To me it is any music that is at least partially based in local tradition, regardless of what may be done with those traditions. They might be played straight or conservatively. They might be approached with great freedom, experimentally, in an entirely modern context fused with all sorts of other influences. But, for me, as long as it has roots in local tradition it could be world music.

WM oasis - We do not hear anymore new revolutionary songs even though there are now many other causes musicians could be engaged in. Why this silence?

G.S - The trouble in 'world music' is so often we don't understand the lyrics of the songs we come to love. There may be more that we are not aware of. That said, from my perspective it

is very hard to write a good political song with an impact that can last beyond the topical moment. Only a few have succeeded. Perhaps that is part of the issue as well.

WM oasis - How do you see the evolution of world music today?

G.S - Hard to say. The space for fusion and experimentation expands more all the time. New evolutions come all the time. We all need to be sure that this isn't at the expense of traditional music. The space must remain for that as well. Both are important to the future. Where it all goes from here, though, is anyone's guess.

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